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8 DEC 1967

The Honorable Alexander H. Flax, Director
National Reconnaissance Office
The Pentagon
Washington, D. C.

Dear Al:

I have given considerable thought to proposals which have been the subject of discussion between you and John Bross earlier in the year about possible measures to strengthen our procedures for planning in the National Reconnaissance Program (NRP) field. It is my impression that an increasingly effective relationship has developed over the last year or so between the NRO and USIB. It is possible, however, that we can further improve existing arrangements for ensuring that our needs for intelligence through overhead coverage and the responsiveness of reconnaissance systems to these needs are kept under constant review.

In this connection, it has been suggested that it might be helpful to establish a small group to identify and arrange for appropriate study of problems which appear to involve the interrelationship of intelligence needs and systems development. It seems to me that such a planning group could ensure that the needs of the intelligence community are defined with sufficient clarity to be helpful in planning the research and development and production of new systems and the modification of existing systems. It would identify and define the basic problems facing the NRP and keep us both informed of action which is being taken to analyze and study these problems, the status of any such studies and the agencies or individuals responsible for conducting the studies. Such a group might usefully recommend the initiation of new studies where desirable. Otherwise its purpose would be to monitor and review the status of planning and studies, both in the field of intelligence requirements and in that of systems development. It would not have decision-making authority.

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NRO. review(s)
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As to composition, I think that the group should be small and consist of a few senior officials who are qualified to understand the general nature of the problems involved in the NRP and who also are representative of senior echelons of agencies of the Government primarily concerned or interested in systems development in the NRP. It would seem to me appropriate to have this group function under NRO chairmanship. Your Deputy might appropriately serve as Chairman with a view to making sure that the activities and deliberations of the group are as useful as possible in assisting the D/NRO. As members of the group, I would suggest that the Deputy Director of NSA or some other appropriate representative of NSA be included in the group. The Deputy Director for Science and Technology of CIA would seem to me to be an appropriate member, and I would also suggest inclusion of Dr. Steininger in view of Dr. Hornig's interest in the systems development aspect of the NRP. I would also suggest that a member of the NIPE Staff be included to serve as my representative. I agree with what I understand to be your thought that the Chairman of COMIREX and the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Reconnaissance of the SIGINT Committee of USIB should serve on the group. I would expect the NIPE Staff member to arrange for such appearances or submissions as may seem appropriate or desirable from USIB agencies or committees other than COMIREX or the SIGINT Committee.

Attached are suggested terms of reference for the proposed group. I would appreciate your reactions.

Sincerely,

/s/ Richard Helms

Richard Helms
Director

Attachment

D/DCI/NIPE:JABROSS:ag (4/12/67)

Distribution: 1 & 2 - D/NRO

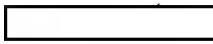
3 - Dr. Steininger

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